

Folk Songs of Four Races



by Harold H. Scott

Let me acknowledge at once that this title is ambiguous! But a sense of truth, and the deficiencies of the English language heret me with difficulties when I was asked, two months ago, for the name of my lecture. My intention was to speak of English, Welsh, Irish, and Scotch Folk-Songs, and I sought for some comprehensive phrase.

First I tried "English Folk Songs", but that didn't do, because the Welsh, Irish, and Scotch are not English.

Then I tried "British Folk Songs" but that didn't do either, because the English are not of British descent.

Next, I happily thought of "Folk Songs of the United Kingdom", but a kind critic pointed out to me the political crisis was such that there might not be a United Kingdom^{at all} by the time I came to deliver my Lecture!

Lastly, I took refuge in the title as it stands today - "Folk Songs of Four Races".

Now, what I have to say makes no pretence to being an exhaustive survey of the subject, even if time allowed, but is rather designed with a view of putting before you some of the facts which have interested me the most, in the hope they may also interest you.

First then, let us treat the matter generally, and, for the sake of clearness, begin by defining the term "Folk-Song". It is usually held to denote the music which has been created by the peasants of a country, in contradistinction to the music which has been composed mainly by, and for, the educated classes, and the term is allied to "Folk Lore" — "that science which treats of the survivals of archaic belief and customs in modern ages";

M^r Cecil Sharp, a well-known expert on Folk-Songs, gives it as his opinion that: "Folk-music" is the product of a race, and reflects feelings and "tastes that are communal rather than personal; it is always in solution; its creation is never completed; while at every moment of its history, it exists not in one form but in many."

On the other hand he describes Art-Music as the work of an individual, expressing his own ideals and aspirations, composed in, comparatively speaking, a short period of time, and fixed in an unalterable form by being written out on paper.

Nevertheless, folk-music holds an important place in the order of musical evolution, and is in direct touch with modern Art-music.

Sir Hubert Parry, in his book on "The Evolution of the Art of Music" says that "the basis of all music, and the very first steps in the long story of musical development are to be found in the musical utterances of the most undeveloped and unconscious types of humanity" and that —

True folk-music begins when the fragments of tune, as nuclei, are strung together upon any principles which give an appearance of orderliness and completeness. It is the outcome of the

"whole man, as is the case with all that is really
 "valuable in art. The features which give it its chief
 "artistic and historical importance (apart from its
 "genuine delightfulness) are those which manifest the
 "working of the perfectly unconscious instinct for
 "design, and those in which the emotional and
 "intellectual basis of the art is illustrated by the
 "qualities of the tunes which correspond with the
 "known characters of the nations and peoples who
 "invent them."

I think that it is this strange dual nature of Folk Song, its intimate touch with both the primitive and the modern world, which invests it with such peculiar interest, and with that elusive, almost magic quality which makes it seem a sort of Fairy Mirror, in which we may see visions of the ^{earth's} earlier days of ~~the earth~~, of those unremembered generations who expressed in song the same elemental emotions which we recognise in ourselves, the emotions which have come down to us through countless ages as the heirloom of humanity.

After this, you may not be surprised to hear that folk-song is a thing which cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula: the human element is too strong, — and the difficulty is farther increased by the very desultory notice which history has bestowed on the whole subject. However, a close study of the ~~tunes~~ tunes themselves, collated with the historical records, furnishes us with a fair working idea of the subject.

We find that Folk-Songs fall into ~~into~~ three large divisions, namely
 Ballad tunes
 Lyrical Songs, and

Dancing tunes.

but affiliated to these are all sorts of different things, such as Song-games, Sea Chanties and Sailor Songs, Carols, and the Lavender Gies, which are still sometimes to be heard in the streets.

It is amazing that such a mass of melodies should have come into existence — still more that they should display such fertile musical invention, and when one comes to question how they all originated, something like the riddle of the Sphinx presents itself. Indeed this is one of the most vexed questions in the whole sphere of folk-song.

Most people are agreed, it is true, that both folk-poetry and folk-tunes are the creation of the unlettered classes, but after that comes the disagreement!

One school of thought holds that folk-music is the embodiment of the peoples' universal mind, "that it is communal in two senses; communal in authorship, and communal in that it reflects the mind of the community;" "that we are indebted to the process of oral tradition, not only for the preservation, but actually for the creation of folk-music.

The other school holds that behind every tune or poem there must be an individual mind.

Professor Wooldridge, one of the greatest authorities on ancient music, even doubts the peasant origin of folk music, and says:—

"The nameless authors of the ballad tunes, for anything their work shows to the contrary, might well have been the very men whom we know and honour as composers for the church;—

and not long since, a member of the young British school of composers, M^r Geoffrey Palmer,

who has been collecting folk-tunes in Ireland, wrote to me, apropos of this very lecture:—

"Between ancient tunes and present-day songs
"there is no empty gap. You find tunes in all
"stages. (At least, that is my experience amongst
"the Irish peasantry - I don't know about the English)
"If a new tune is liked, the ballad-maker takes
"it and writes a new set of words to it on some
"popular present-day topic. These words go out
"of date perhaps, and the tune, if it is good
"enough, is kept on for some new verses. I think
"all folk-tunes came from melodies invented
"by a particular person, and that they don't
"grow up spontaneous!"

"But" adds M^r Palmer "it is a vexed subject!"

That it certainly is, but whichever view one adopts, it is fairly obvious that both words and music must undergo a certain process of modification in their passage from singer to singer, since infallible accuracy is quite inhuman, and though these slight alterations are probably unconscious, they do in course of time produce a distinct result.

Now it is a curious fact, that ~~though~~ the words are usually the most important thing to folk-singers - indeed, they are often unable to remember the tunes at all apart from the ~~verses~~, yet it is just the words which have suffered most by oral transmission. The tunes, which appear to be stored in a more sub-conscious part of the ^{memory} memory, on the other hand, seem to have hardly suffered at all, and are, if anything, strengthened and improved by their passage through many different minds.

The fact suggests an interesting problem in

psychical research!

As a proof that folk-singers are often oblivious of the actual notes sung, M^r Cecil Sharp cites an amusing instance ~~when~~ of hearing a man sing "Brennan on the Moor" at a village Inn, the rest of the company joining in the chorus. They all agreed as to the words, but nearly all sang different versions of the air, appearing quite unconscious of the amazing discords they produced!

Far quainter things, however, happen from phonetic decay, and the corruption of words unknown to the singers, for M^r Sharp relates how he once noted down a set of words of "Little Saint Hugh," which though otherwise quite clear, began thus, most surprisingly

"Do rain, do rain, American corn,
Do rain both great and small."

Nor could the singer explain this. It was only when compared with other recorded versions of the ballad that the lines were found to be:—

"It do rain, it do rain in merry Lincoln
It do rain both great and small."

Another amusing instance (noted in the Folk Song Journal) was that of a song called "Judy Gudio". The singer thought it was the name of an Irish girl, but another man said "no, it means what a Jew believes."

Even more delightful was the case of a man who sang a song in which the words "Dimmy Darcy ran through the wood" occurred. On being asked what Dimmy Darcy meant he said he thought it was a dromedary, and a good deal of conversation took place about it. Soon after, the poem was found on some old ballad sheets, and the mysterious

Dimmy Darey proved to be "a little timid hare ran through the wood".

As an illustration of the way in which the original words of a song may become obscured by transmission through the ages, I propose to show you a remarkable folk song called "The Twelve Apostles".

It is of great antiquity and occurs in very many ancient and modern languages, from Hebrew downwards. It appears to have always had a theological significance; some of the allusions are very difficult to interpret, but the first, which says "One and one is all alone and evermore shall be so" undoubtedly indicates God.

In the present version which comes from Dorsetshire, the lines for numbers eight and nine, —

"Eight are the gabriel angels

Nine and nine of the brightest shine" —

clearly refer to angels, but it is more difficult to realize this in other versions, where the angels appear under such unusual names as the "Bold rangers, bright shiners, brown striped walkers, and gable rangers".

I must explain that in the case of this, as of all the Folk Songs you are to hear today, the melodies were originally sung alone, and the piano accompaniment has been added as a concession to modern ears.

Illustration "The Twelve Apostles"

Besides the remarkable interest of the words, "The Twelve Apostles" supplies an unusually good example of the wide diffusion of folk poetry, being actually cosmopolitan, as are also such

"William and Margaret"; "Lord" and others.

But if we turn to the tunes themselves we find they are very rarely cosmopolitan — (the only instance I can think of at this moment being the familiar "For he's a jolly good fellow", which is said to have been known to the Crusaders in Palestine) although the folk tunes of England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland are amazingly widely known within their own countries.

In examining the tunes from their purely musical aspect, we find numberless points of interest, but to get the full enjoyment, we have to shift our standpoint from that in which we listen to complicated modern music.

For instance we are so used to concerted music and songs with accompaniments, that at first it is hard to realize the bulk of folk-music is monophonic — that is, a single melody, ~~with~~^{out} accompaniment. The harmonic element — which plays such an enormous part in modern art-music, being therefore removed, folk-tunes have to make their effect mainly by means of melodic outline — i.e. the actual curves made the successions of notes, by the rhythms into which these notes are formed, and by the different ways in which the patterns made by these rhythmic phrases are arranged. Special colour can also be imparted to the tunes by the Mode (or scale) in which they are cast.

Now, it is obvious that a great deal of aesthetic effect can be obtained by outline. For example, a tune that moves round and round a few notes lying close together in pitch, produces a monotonous impression on the ear, and the actual curves, if drawn out on paper, are seen

to be of small extent. The greatest monotony would be a tune on one note, represented by a straight line.

On the other hand, wide sweeping tunes, covering a large compass of notes, produce curves as beautiful as those of mountains or sea waves. A moment's thought shows that outline can be used to create a direct emotional effect in music, — the different curves being so disposed, for example, as to lead up to an exciting climax at the highest point touched by the tune.

Rhythm also supplies us with an interesting study: — those tunes in which rhythm is the preponderating element belonging more to the dancing tunes, though in the highest types of tune both melody and rhythm are used to enhance each other.

Very interesting are the plans on which the different phrases are arranged to form whole tunes, for herein lies the germ of musical form, as I explained fully in my Lectures here last winter.

The most primitive type is that in which the same phrase is repeated over and over again, to secure unity, and it can be reduced to a very simple formula — A — A — A —, yet in that is inherent the principle which has given rise to variation form. This type is but rarely found in the United Kingdom.

As soon as a contrasting phrase is introduced, a very usual arrangement for folk melodies is the following one —

A — A — B — A — .

an assertion, a contrast, a restatement. You will notice the initial phrase is repeated.

This probably arose from the fact that the normal stanza in ballad poetry consists of four lines

and the music had to accommodate itself, but it also serves an aesthetic purpose, for it impresses the first idea firmly on the hearers, before moving to the clause of contrast. This form has been the most valuable of all to artistic music.

Another pattern, said to be specially characteristic of Celtic folk-tunes is that in which the middle contrasting phrase is repeated, but many English tunes exhibit the same feature. In formula it stands thus: —

A — B — B — A.

Other fairly common patterns are: —

A — B — A — C. — A, B, C, B. — A, B, C, D.

Anyone for whom abstract design in music has any interest, can easily work these out for themselves.

Turning from the question of form to that of tonality, we find ourselves again confronted by a most interesting range of problems, over which considerable controversy still rages.

Probably many people have noticed something unusual in the sound of some folk songs, but have been at a loss to assign a cause to this archaic colour. The explanation lies in the fact that a very great number of folk tunes are not in either of the scales upon which modern harmonic music is based, ~~these~~ ^{scales} which have been so exclusively used during the last 300 years that many people have grown to regard them as immutable laws of the musical universe.

Really, our modern major and minor scales are just the descendants of ages of scale making.

Behind them lies that complicated system which prevailed throughout Europe from the early centuries of the Christian era up to the beginning of the 17th century: these older

scales are known to us as the Ecclesiastical Modes, and they in their turn were developed from the old Greek Modes, and they again probably had their root in something older still.

Now, as I have already said, a great number of our Folk-tunes conform wonderfully closely to the practice of the Ecclesiastical Modes — in fact seem actually to be composed in the Modes, — such slight variations as occur from the strictest rules being often explainable by a singer's instinctive tendency to make things easy for the voice. This is the view usually adopted, but other theories have been advanced such as that of a "single, loosely-knit, modal, folk song scale, embracing within itself the characteristics of several of the most used modes."

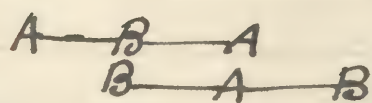
Another theory is that the Ecclesiastical Modes themselves are of incredible antiquity, and traces of their influence are said to appear plainly in all primitive music, even in Red Indian Folk Songs!!

For our present purposes, however, I think that a working knowledge of the Modes as practised by mediæval, Europeans ~~musicians~~, and a knowledge of the pentatonic scale, puts us in a fair position to appreciate our folk-music.

The pentatonic scale consists of five notes only, as its name implies, instead of seven; it is still used in Scotland and Ireland, sometimes also in England, and is known in many parts of the world. Its most striking characteristic is that it contains no semi-tones — gaps being left where they would ordinarily

occur in a modal scale.

The modes number fourteen in all, according to the Ecclesiastical system; they were divided into two groups of seven, but of these, the Authentic Modes in the first group are by far the most important to realize; the others, the Plagal Modes, were like shadows to the Authentic ones; really the same notes, but ~~with~~ the final now made the center ~~with the notes~~ of the scale.



Now, the seven Authentic Modes possessed a name each, and a distinct individuality, because the order in which the tones and semi-tones were arranged was different in each. In our modern scales the order never varies — the tones and semi-tones in G major fall in just the same way irrespective of pitch, as those in C major, but the Modes worked on a different plan.

The quickest way to understand it is to think of the white notes on the piano. Say we start and make a scale beginning on D — we get a scale like this which was what they called the First, or Dorian Mode

Illustration — Scale of Dorian Mode.
also point out blackboard

Then if you start a scale on the next white note above D, that is, E, the actual number of tones and semitones remains the same, but they all come in different places with regard to distance from the starting point — the Final, as

it is called in technical phraseology. This Mode on E was called the Phrygian. The other modes follow on the same idea. If you consult the List I have written out of the Authentic Modes, you will find then, they are: —

The Dorian — starting on D.

" Phrygian — " " E

" Lydian — " " F

" Mixolydian " " G

" Aeolian " " A

" Locrian " " B

" Ionian " " C

Of these, the Dorian, Mixolydian and Aeolian were the modes most valued by Mediaeval Church Composers, and it is not surprising to find they are often employed in folk-tunes. Peasant composers would quite naturally cast their songs ^{in the Modes} they heard.

The Aeolian Mode is the direct forerunner of our minor scale, and I believe that in English folk-tunes, Aeolian airs predominate over the minor, as regards numbers.

The Dorian mode was considered noble, strong and rather rugged in sound, and is a great favourite in English folk-song.

The Mixolydian ^{The Modus angelicus} possesses a peculiar poetic quality, on account of its major third and minor seventh, making it sound to modern ears as if it were in two keys at once. ^{the Modus mysticus}

The Phrygian mode, though ~~much~~ ^{our} used by Church composers, is very rare in folk music, possibly because it lends itself badly to unaccompanied melody.

The Lydian mode was called by mediaeval theorists the "Modus Lactus", as it was thought to have a joyful character. Milton was probably thinking of this quite as much as the softer, older

Greek Mode of the same name when he wrote in
 "L' Allegro"

"And ever against eating cares"

"Lap me in soft Lydian airs"

The Locrian, for various technical reasons was never used at all, and the Ionian Mode, identical with our major scale C, as regards notes, but bound by modal rules, was in high favour for folk tunes, but viewed with distrust by the Church.

Now modulation, — that is a ^{progression} ~~change~~ from one key to another, was practically absent from Modal music, and Folk Song frequently displays this same characteristic.

So that when we find tunes showing a marked modulation we may feel pretty sure they are modern, or have been tampered with by 18th century musicians.

Nothing but long experience can give anyone a right to pronounce on the actual age of folk tunes, but in case you are interested to find clues, this modal feature is a helpful one. If a tune is in a mode the chances are it is old — and even some tunes which appear to be in the major scale are really in the Ionian mode: — to help determine this, examine the last cadence. If the penultimate note falls to the Final, it is almost certainly old, for the Modal Laws required this form of cadence

Illustrate on blackboard.

If ~~however~~ the penultimate note rises to the Final, the tune is more modern, since the rising leading note only crept into use gradually before the end of the Polyphonic period in music — that is, before the year 1600.

Welsh Folk tunes, however, may be said to supply the exception which proves the rule, since

Though modal tunes do exist, ^{amongst them} by far the greatest number are in the major or minor scales, yet are probably older than this would at first sight imply, for the Triple Harp was known in Wales at an early date. As this instrument possessed two outer rows of strings, supplying a complete and extended diatonic scale, the middle rows supplying the sharps and flats, — this may easily have been the case.

Which brings me from the general to the particular, and having just spoken of Wales, I will begin my closer survey of our Folk tunes, with those of the Principality.

Now the Welsh have always been an extraordinarily musical race, but, if I may venture to say so, their attitude towards music, has been one of splendid enthusiasm, marred by a lack of that critical justice which discriminates clearly between what is good and bad in art. Hence magnificent folk tunes may be found side by side with most commonplace airs.

The Welsh have also in former years made most patriotic but reckless assertions as to the age of their folk airs.

For instance one very beautiful tune, called "Morva Rhuddlan" (on the Marsh of Ryddlan) is undoubtedly old, but though records of it appear in print for over 200 years, the tune itself bears no evidence that it dates from the 8th century, especially if we collate it with what little we know of music of that date in other countries.

I thought you might be interested to hear it, as it is very characteristic. It is in the minor mode; it exhibits that fondness for triple time and simple rhythmic organization so usual in

Welsh airs, and the clean melancholy sweep of the tune is typical of this kind of national sentiment.

Illustration "Morva Rhuddlan"

In brief, from the actual history of music in Wales, it appears that music was cultivated there from an early date, and that the people knew and practised part singing — (mention of this occurs in the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis. 1146-1220) There also appears to have been considerable intercourse between the Irish and Welsh harpers — the Irish being pre-eminent ~~as~~ harpers, and the Welsh running them very close.

It is not surprising then, to find that the Welsh folk-tunes fall into two distinct classes; the airs designed for the harp, which are often quite unvocal in character, and the songs purely for singing, — in fact the folk-songs in the truest sense.

The harp-tunes can easily be distinguished from the others by their chordal structure, and are sometimes very fine, but the most beautiful songs probably are to be found among the true folk airs.

As an example of these, and of lyrical beauty of the purest type, I want to show you "Gwenith Gwyn". It is in the major key, and the exquisite ^{skill} with which the melodic outline passes by a series of smaller climaxes to the highest, central point of the tune, is well worth noting.

Illustration "Gwenith Gwyn"

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The first printed collection of Welsh airs was issued by John Parry a noted harper, in 1742, and since then Welsh folk music has been a recognised thing to antiquaries and musicians though scarcely studied scientifically till within the last few years.

Passing now from Wales to Ireland we come to the finest folk-music the world has at present known. Doubtless there is a close connection between this and the remarkable learning and artistic culture which existed in Ireland during the early centuries of the Christian era. Irish ecclesiastical musicians ~~were famous all over the continent for their attainments more than held their own against other countries~~, and this pre-eminence was continued in later centuries by the harpers.

There is no doubt that folk music flourished during these early times, and though the devastating wars of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries may have checked the growth of art music, they certainly cannot have injured the Folk-music, if we are to judge by results. Indeed, during the 16th century wars with England, the popular music became a political power, and later on, the Jacobite cause made a deep effect on Irish folk-song, just as it did in Scotland.

As an illustration, I want you to hear the Lament for the death of Patrick Sarsfield, a favourite Jacobite hero, and the only great Captain the Irish possessed at this time.

Illustration "Lament for Patrick Sarsfield"

From the 18th century, the interest of cultured musicians was attracted towards Irish folk-music, and efforts were made to note down many of the traditional melodies. Some of the most famous collections are those issued by Bunting in 1796, 1809, and 1840, and the Petrie Collection, which was made about the middle of the last century. Meanwhile in the early part of the 19th century, public attention had been drawn to the folk tunes by Thomas Moore the poet having written words to many of the airs, which were published under the title of "Irish Melodies."

Though Moore was not free from the affections of his time, he certainly possessed a power of writing round the essential elements of a tune, and he accomplished something of the same work for the Irish folk songs that Burns did for the Scotch, though Burns was incomparably the greater poet, and had a special qualification for the work in that he was a peasant ~~himself~~.

When we examine the Folk tunes themselves we find that a number are in the modes, and a distinctive feature in many of them is the reiteration of the Key-note at the end of a phrase, a feature which you will notice in "Emer's Farewell", and "The Dispute", two of the Illustrations you are to hear. This feature is also sometimes to be found in Welsh Folk Music. As regards melodic outline and balance of form, the Irish tunes are exquisitely polished and artistic, while their emotional

range practically covers the whole gamut of human feeling. The War Songs, Love Songs, Lullabies, Humorous Songs, Laments, etc. are all equally fine.

As a specimen of a War Song M^r Green will sing you a noble tune called "Fianna" and as an illustration of a humorous narrative song, you are to hear one called "The Dispute". It was noted by M^r Geoffrey Palmer last summer in County Donegal, and as far as he has been able to discover had not hitherto appeared in any collection of Folk Songs. It is thanks to his courtesy that I am able to show it to you, — indeed the proofs only came from the printer four days ago, as the song is being published with another one, the accompaniment in both cases having been written by M^r Palmer.

I should like to add that M^r Plunket Greene, who is going to sing both songs, has very kindly granted his permission for this, the first performance of "The Dispute".

Illustrations " Fianna " " The Dispute "

As a fourth example of Irish folk-music, I propose to show you the song generally known as "Emer's Farewell", probably the most famous folk-tune in existence, on account of its marvellous beauty and technical perfection; and the accompaniment to it has been added by the greatest Irish composer, Sir Charles Stanford.

You will notice the way in which the tune rises by a series of crises to the climax on the highest note.

Illustration "Emmet's Farewell"

In speaking of Scotch Folk Music, it is well to realize at once that it falls into two portions, the Lowland and the Highland, which are the work of different races, displaying different characteristics.

The Lowland music approximates most nearly to English folk-song, — the Highland, or Gaelic to the Irish.

I believe, however, that both divisions originally had a common feature in the use of the pentatonic scale, upon which the earliest folk tunes were based.

I have already explained the nature of this five-note scale, but you may be interested to hear a tune in it. The one I have chosen is a very old version of the beautiful "Gala Water."

Taking the note C. as the starting point, you will notice that the 4th and 7th of our modern scale of C. are entirely absent.

Illustration "Gala Water"

This imperfect pentatonic scale must gradually have been displaced by the Ecclesiastical system of Modes, since we find the bulk of Lowland folk-tunes are modal, the Aeolian being the favourite scale. What the history of early Scottish Folk Song may have been, is largely a matter of conjecture, before the reign of Charles I, when the first manuscript collections of folk-tunes were made.

In the reign of Charles II. Scotch tunes were very popular in London, and during the 18th century they had such a great vogue that

many spurious tunes were manufactured no nearer Scotland than we are now.

True Scotch folk-song, however, took on quite a different phase in its own country, for the Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745 made an indelible impress on the hearts of the people — a fact reflected at once in their folk-music.

New Jacobite words were supplied to many of the old tunes, and though few of these are now known, — (songs such as "Bonnie Punie Charlie" being far more modern) — I propose showing you some verses of the song known as — "Wae's me for Punie Charlie" — a tune that was old before Punie Charlie ever drew breath.

It is in the Mixolydian Mode, and is called "Lady Cassilis' Lilt" in the *Skeen U.S.* of 1635, and was also known as "Johnny Faa" and "The Gipsy Laddie". The original words related the flight of Lady Cassilis with a gipsy — a version of the same story appearing in the English song of "The Wraggle-taggle Gipsies". The words about Punie Charlie were added to the song much later in its history.

Illustration "Wae's me for Punie Charlie"

Lowland Folk-music received much attention during the 18th and 19th centuries, as its merits well deserve. Dr. Ernest Walker describes it "as most at home in slow tunes, which are often marked by a severe, but nevertheless, tender beauty of an altogether exceptional order". The fact that Burns wrote or re-wrote the words of so many of the songs has given

them a peculiar hold on everyone.

Before leaving Lowland folk music one other thing must be mentioned: — that the airs were not all originally vocal — having been designed for the violin, but were adopted subsequently by Burns and other writers for their verses: The dance tunes often exhibiting the "Scotch snap".

It has been said that if the difficulty of estimating the age of Lowland Folk music is great, "it is as nothing compared to what is met with in considering that of the Highlands." However, it is clear from recent researches that a wealth of traditional Gaelic music exists, and that it approximates more closely to primitive conditions than anything remaining to us in other parts of the Kingdom. It also seems evident that the earliest Gaelic music was devoid of rhythm, and the irregularity of form in the songs known today, probably points to great antiquity. The tunes often seem wild and artless, but are full of Celtic fire and spirituality — even a sort of sublimity, and are extraordinarily interesting to study.

As an example, I want you to hear a superb "Hymn of Praise" — the words in this case being an English version of the original. The fact that this is a hymn need not surprise us at all, since Folk Songs and Hymns are closely allied. Many of the Welsh hymn-tunes are traditional melodies; there are Folk-Song survivals in the Jewish music for the Synagogue, and many of the early Protestant hymns were adapted from Folk Songs, by a slight change of rhythm and words.

For instance, the song "O Innsbruck, I

must leave thee" became the beautiful choral "O, World, I soon must leave thee".

The tune of this Gaelic hymn of praise displays rather a peculiar feature, being hexatonic, — that is constructed so that it omits one note altogether.

Other Gaelic tunes sometimes have this peculiarity also.

Illustration "Hymn of Praise"

I have purposely left the English Folk Music to the last, because it has only recently been realized. For some totally incomprehensible reasons, musicians seem to have tacitly agreed in the belief that, while Scotland, Ireland, and Wales had their folk music, England could show nothing more genuinely national than what we call "Old English Songs", such as "Hearts of Oak".

Research has confuted this belief. England is as rich in Folk-music as any country, while many tunes once thought to be Scotch or Welsh ~~are~~ are now proved to be English. The fact that in England "the same tune may be heard, with hardly any variation in Norfolk, Sussex or Yorkshire, proves more than anything the fundamental character of genuine folk song."

Nearly all the Church modes are represented, and though modal tunes are quite often found associated with words that refer to such recent events as the Napoleonic wars, this does not prove that the words and music are contemporaneous, as it is a common thing for new words to be added to old tunes, and vice versa. Indeed it is exceedingly rare to find ballads which retain both their original words and tune

This applies also to ~~Scotland~~ Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Of the earliest stages of folk song here, we know little, but it is thought possible that the melody of the famous Round "Summer is i' cummen in" may have had a Folk-Song origin — date, about 1240. We also know that ⁱⁿ the first part of the 16th century, Tye, Shepherd, and Taverner, three of the first distinctively English composers, used a folk-tune "Westron Wynde" as a canto-fermo in settings of the Mass. By the reign of Henry VIII ballads became so popular as to wield a political power, and the careful King directed dire penalties against them. Nevertheless, folk song only flourished the more, and by the reign of Elizabeth reached a zenith of excellence.

The tunes were very seldom written down, but the words were often printed on sheets called "Broad-sides", which were hawked through the country districts by "flying stationers" or pedlars.

These ballad sheets were frequently pasted on kitchen walls, cupboard doors etc. Collections of ballad verses known as "Garlands" were also printed, and rejoiced in wonderfully quaint names — for instance — "A Handful of Pleasant Delites" (spelt to rhyme with Kites) — "The Crown Garland of Goulden Roses" — "The Garland of Goodwill" etc.

In the 2nd half of the 16th century folk-tunes acquired a special significance for cultured composers, because they and the dance tunes, written on their model, supplied almost the only examples of form for purely secular music, at a time when the old Ecclesiastical traditions were being broken down. It is therefore not surprising that the greatest Elizabethan composers have enshrined a number of popular folk songs, such

as Seller's Round, and the Carman's Whistle, in their works.

As an illustration you may be interested to hear a set of variations by William Byrd (a distinguished composer, in the service of Queen Elizabeth) on the folk-song called "The Carman's Whistle".

How great a hold music had upon the nation at large may be gathered by frequent contemporary allusions, and some of the most interesting are those which Shakespeare makes in his plays to the popular folk-tunes of that time. For example, he refers, amongst others, to "Heart's ease" - "Come o'er the bourn, Bessie," - "Fortune, my foe" - "Peg-a-Ramsey" and Greensleeves, - the latter a most rollicking tune.

In the next century we sometimes get glimpses of the folk-tunes through the various editions of Playford's "Dancing Master" first published in Commonwealth times, and in the 18th century, the "Beggar's Opera" by Gay and Pepusch, was built up on folk-tunes, but tunes so altered to suit genteel 18th century taste that they have little value from our point of view.

The stream of folk-music, however, flowed on quite undisturbed among the unlettered classes -; years passed, cultured musicians ignored it: - about the middle of the 19th century even the folk singers themselves seemed to lose their hold on the long thread of tradition. Then towards the end of the century came a remarkable revival of interest amongst cultured enthusiasts. The Folk Song Society was formed - musicians have gone about the country noting down songs from the lips of old

people, and as a result, we find ourselves possessed of a magnificent folk-song literature, if I may use the term.

To illustrate this I propose to show you specimens of the three main types, — i.e. Dancing tunes, Lyrical tunes, and Ballads.

The first called "Twenty, eighteen" is clearly a dancing tune from its rhythm, and also from the last bar, which seems designed to lead straight back into the tune without pause, these circular tunes being usually associated with dancing.

Illustration "Twenty, eighteen"

The Lyrical song, "Bushes and Bruers" which you are to hear, ~~was~~ noted in Essex by Mr Vaughan Williams, one of our most distinguished composers and authorities on Folk Song. The extremely beautiful air which is in the Aeolian Mode, conforms closely to modal laws; and apart from its beauty of form and melody, it has become famous from the remark of its singer, that "When you got the words, God Almighty sent the tune."

Illustration "Bushes and Bruers"

The specimen of a ballad is "Ward, the Pirate," an extraordinarily spirited song, dating from Tudor times, Captain Ward being a famous pirate ^{in the 16th century}. The song was noted in Norfolk by Mr Vaughan Williams, and the tune is in the Ionian Mode. At first sight it looks like an ordinary major tune, but the descending cadence gives the clue.

Illustration "Ward the Pirate"

In conclusion I should like to call your attention to the sensitive rapport which seems to exist between Folk Song and a national school of composers.

Greig said, not long before his death, "The English Folk Songs will doubtless be able to form the basis of a national style, as they have done in other lands, those of the greatest musical culture not excepted." — and it is significant that the present wave of enthusiasm for our folk-music should synchronize with the great Renaissance that is going on in our Art Music. It becomes more significant still, when we recollect that Folk-music displayed extraordinary vitality in the 16th century, at the very time when English Art Music first took its distinctive character, and that the Madrigalian composers surpassed all the world in the years when our folk songs were at their best.

The direct effects of Folk Song Revival on contemporary composition may be seen in Sir Charles Stanford's Two Irish Rhapsodies for Orchestra, in which he has employed "Emer's Farewell" and "Fainna" — (both of them tunes you have heard today) — in Mr. Vaughan Williams' Norfolk Rhapsodies for Orchestra, based on folk-tunes collected in Norfolk, including "Ward, the Pirate" — in Mr. Rutland Boughton's Folk song Variations for Chorus — in Dr. Charles Wood's ^{Symphony} ~~Orchestral~~ Variations on "Patrick Sarsfield", — and in many other fine works.

What the indirect effects may be,

it is impossible to say at present — we are too much in the middle of events to obtain a comprehensive, impartial view, but there can be no doubt that a study of such healthy open-air things as our folk tunes cannot fail to be of value at a time when all the powerful foreign impulses in music seem arrayed on the neurotic side of the Art.

There is a certain danger, it is true among extreme enthusiasts of elevating Folk Song to a central position in the artistic firmament, at the expense of cultured music but this need not affect its real value for us. The best can only be obtained by a sane appreciative study of Folk Song and Art Music alike, and in the case of each, I venture to think that Knowledge is not only power — it is also ~~pure~~ pleasure. brings us pure pleasure ~~in~~ in our national music.

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